

Message Text

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ACTION NEA-12

INFO OCT-01 ADP-00 CPR-02 SS-15 IO-13 AF-10 PM-07 NSC-10

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----- 126006

R 181400Z JUL 73

FM AMEMBASSY JIDDA

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 4397

C O N F I D E N T I A L JIDDA 3008

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR, SA

SUBJ: FOREIGN MINISTRY INFORMED OF US VIEW RE ARAFAT'S
PRESENCE AT OFFICIAL DINNER

REF: JIDDA 2945; STATE 139874

1. I INFORMED ACTING FOREIGN MINISTER MAS'UD THAT I HAD BEEN PERSONALLY AND OFFICIALLY EMBARRASSED BY FINDING I HAD NO CHOICE BUT TO BE PRESENT AT DINNER WHERE YASSIR ARAFAT HAD, WITHOUT WARNING TO ANY OTHER GUESTS, BECOME ADDITIONAL GUEST OF HONOR. ACCORDINGLY I HAD BEEN AUTHORIZED BY DEPT TO STATE THAT ARAFAT IS AN INDIVIDUAL KNOWN TO BE OBJECTIONABLE TO MY GOVT BECAUSE OF HIS DEEP PERSONAL INVOLVEMENT AND THAT OF HIS ORGANIZATION IN THE ASSASSINATION OF TWO AMERICAN DIPLOMATS IN KHARTOUM. I SHOULD, THEREFORE, HAVE BEEN GIVEN THE OPPORTUNITY TO ARRANGE GRACEFULLY TO BE ABSENT AND TO AVOID FOR ME WHAT WAS AN UNPLEASANT SITUATION. IT WAS TO BE HOPED THAT SIMILAR INCIDENTS COULD BE AVOIDED IN THE FUTURE BY GIVING MEMBERS OF THE DIPLOMATIC CORPS ADEQUATE ADVANCE NOTICE OF THE GUESTS TO BE HONORED AT OFFICIAL FUNCTIONS.

2. MAS'UD GAVE NO DIRECT REPLY (RESPONSIBILITY, AS HE LATER POINTED OUT, LAY IN THIS INSTANCE WITH ROYAL PROTOCOL AND NOT FOREIGN MINISTRY) BUT GAVE ME "PERSONAL" EXPLANATION: ARAFAT HAD ARRIVED IN JIDDA PRACTICALLY UNANNOUNCED JUST AS DINNER BEGAN AND AS AN OFFICIAL GUEST

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HE HAD TO BE INCLUDED AT AFFAIR FOR SHEIKH OF BAHRAIN.

KING, SHEIKH ISSA, AND PALESTINIAN LEADER HAD ALL ARRIVED SIMULTANEOUSLY AT GUEST PALACE AND RULES OF HOSPITALITY REQUIRED HE BE GIVEN ALL POSSIBLE COURTEOUS TREATMENT.

3. I SAID IT WAS NOT FOR ME TO SUGGEST TO SAUDI PROTOCOL OFFICIALS HOW THIS KIND OF SITUATION SHOULD BE HANDLED, BUT IT DID SEEM ONE SIMPLE SOLUTION WOULD HAVE BEEN TO DIVERT ARAFAT INTO GENERAL THRONG OF GUESTS RATHER THAN ESTABLISHING HIM IN RECEIVING LINE, A PROCEDURE ALONG WITH HIS SITTING AT HEAD TABLE WHICH INDICATED HE WAS BEING HONORED. I SAID THIS WAS CLEARLY IMPRESSION OF NUMBER OF MY DIPLOMATIC COLLEAGUES WHO WERE JUST AS DISSATISFIED AS I WAS WITH WHAT HAD HAPPENED. MAS'UD THEN TRIED TO ASSERT THAT SINCE INVITATION CARD HAD MENTIONED ONLY SHEIKH OF BAHRAIN, IN FACT HE WAS ONLY HONORED GUEST. I POINTED OUT THAT TREATMENT OF ARAFAT CLEARLY INDICATED HE WAS BEING HONORED EQUALLY WITH SHEIKH ISSA. MAS'UD CONCLUDED DISCUSSION BY SAYING HE WOULD REPORT MY VIEWS TO PALACE.
THACHER

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